Biographies of scientists to promote public interest in science and technology

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Biographies of scientists and engineers, that acquire big reading audience, can exert great power in appealing to the public the importance of science and technology for developing industry and modernizing their society and can raise great interest in science and technology among people, so long as the role model featured in the biographies is consonant with the social atmosphere of the day. This is shown in the changing way various biographies of Galileo Galilei published in Japan since the end of the world war two have been welcomed among Japanese people.

For a few decades after Japan was defeated in the war, biographical stories of Galileo was enthusiastically welcomed and considerable number of his biographies by different authors were published. Japanese people thought, after the war ended, that they had been unreasonably got involved in the unjustifiable war under the pressure of military authorities which strongly opposed to rational and scientific thinking. Henceforce, soon after the war people came to fight against various traditional authorities and endeavoured to modernize Japanese society. This social milieu welcomed the image of Galileo who had bravely fought against religious authorities in favor of scientific reasoning and helped Western countries advance from feudalistic into modern societies.

However, as Japanese society comes to be modernized, and the enemies against which people can effectively fight by simply emphasizing the importance of scientific thinking, Galileo comes to be less appealing to the public and young people are increasingly losing interest in science and technology. New scientific heroes featuring the new role models which well match the mood currently prevalent among people seems to be required to take the place of Galileo.